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INFO RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 7743
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 0556
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RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 4732
RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT PRIORITY 0044
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK PRIORITY 3520
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT PRIORITY 0717
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ALMATY PRIORITY 9333
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 7904
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 9957
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 5726
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 3373
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA PRIORITY 0663
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 3001
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 003898

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SUBJECT: MILITARY AND MILITANTS CLASH IN NORTH WAZIRISTAN

ISLAMABAD 00003898 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker, DSCG 05-01,
January 2005, Edition 1, Reason: 1.4 (B,D)

11. (S//NF) Summary. March 1st and 2nd raids on militant training facilities by the Pakistan Special Operations Task Force (SOTF) in Miram Shah and Sedgai, North Waziristan led to the biggest clashes in the region in three years. The GOP military attacks and subsequent retaliatory strikes reportedly led by militant leaders Maulana Abdul Khaliq and Sadiq Noor--which included a one-day takeover of government buildings in Miram Shah-- have led to approximately 100 militant casualties and the death of four soldiers, according to GHQ. As of March 7th, Frontier Corps forces had largely regained control of Miram Shah, though militants are still engaged in attacks against military and government forces. Pakistani military spokesmen have blamed the porous Pakistan-Afghan border and what they are calling Afghanistan's inability to control the Taliban insurgents on its side of the border for the escalating military conflict in the Waziristan region. End Summary.

Strike Leads to Heavy Clashes

12. (S//NF) On March 1, GHQ reports that the Pakistani SOTF raided a militant training compound near Miram Shah. A day later, Pakistan military forces struck a militant training facility in Sedgai, North Waziristan. The March 2nd attack killed 35 "foreign fighters"--including "Arabs and Chechens" as well as 10 local facilitators, according to Interservices Public Relations Spokesman Shaukat Sultan. Militant leaders Maulvi Abdul Khaliq Haqqani and Maulana Sadiq Noor--who Pakistani military officials say have been spearheading attacks against Pakistani military forces and government officials since December--ordered an immediate retaliatory attack against Pakistani military forces in the Miram Shah area. During the attack, militant forces temporarily took control of some government buildings, and launched rockets against Pakistan military camps. GHQ reports that the attacks led to the death of one Army soldier and three Frontier Corps

soldiers; they also damaged telephone and electricity infrastructure in Miram Shah.

¶3. (S//NF) The military has launched several raids, including on the compounds of Abdul Khaliq, Sadiq Noor, and Siraj Haqqani. Pakistani military officials indicate that up to 100 militants have been killed. On March 7, the North Waziristan Political Agent oversaw the demolition of Khaliq's madrassa in Miram Shah. Later that evening, he was nearly killed when his vehicle was ambushed while traveling on the main road from Miram Shah to Mir Ali.

¶4. (C) As of March 6, GHQ and North Waziristan Political Agent Zahir-ul Islam reported that the military had re-asserted control over Miram Shah, though pockets of resistance may remain. The political administration has enforced a curfew and cordon of Miram Shah, including suspending traffic on the main road between Miram Shah and Bannu. Peshawar contacts and press reports indicate that the populace of Miram Shah has emptied out into neighboring Bannu and Karak to avoid the fighting. The military is attempting to stop the exodus of local residents to Bannu, Mir Ali, Kohat, and DI Khan, fearing that militants may also find safe-haven in the "settled" areas of NWFP.

Background on Abdul Khaliq Haqqani and Sadiq Noor

5.(C) Several Pakistani press reports dating back to September and November 2005 tie Maulvi Abdul Khaliq Haqqani and Maulana Sadiq Noor to known anti-coalition militants Abdullah Masood, Zakeem Khan, former Afghan Taliban commander Jalaluddin Haqqani and his son, Siraj Haqqani. Abdul Khaliq heads the Darul Uloom Fareeda Gulshan-e Ilm madrassa in Miram Shah, the target of a March 7 raid. ISPR Spokesperson Shaukat Sultan called Maulana Sadiq Noor a "key Al Qaida facilitator"

ISLAMABAD 00003898 002 OF 002

and placed him on the military's "most wanted" list in November 2005. Some reports indicate that he was targeted during the September 14 raid on the Haqqani Madrassa in Mir Ali because of his communications with Abdullah Masood; he continued to elude capture during a subsequent November 2005 negotiation with the Utmanzai Wazir tribe.

Musharraf Blames Afghanistan

¶6. (C) Some press reports indicate that some of the militants killed were Afghan. President Musharraf and Interior Minister Aftab Sherpao were quick to point fingers via the press at Afghanistan for the continued militant "incursion" across the porous Afghan-Pakistan border. As part of a continuing offensive on Afghanistan over the past few days, Prime Minister Aziz yesterday suggested to reporters that Afghanistan's inability to control its borders is destabilizing the FATA and told reporters critical of the military operations in the region that the sustained military action in Waziristan was necessitated by armed militants entering Pakistani territory.

Comment

¶7. (C) If the casualty estimates are accurate, then this series of engagements is one of the most serious since Pakistani military forces first entered Waziristan. In the Embassy's judgment, the Pakistan Military's strikes on March 1-2 stirred up a hornet's nest that the military was underprepared for. Though the situation has calmed in the last two days, it is too soon to assess the medium and long term effects. End comment.
CROCKER